

REMARKS

Claims 11, 15 through 17, and 25 are pending in the case. Claims 11 and 16 are herein amended. Claim 25 is new.

Claim Objections

Claim 15 has been objected to under 37 CFR 1.75(c) as being of improper dependent form, namely because the subject matter claimed had already been recited in claim 16, the claim from which it depended.

The Applicant believes claim 15 is now in proper dependent form, due to newly amended claim 16, and respectfully requests removal of the objection.

Claim Rejections – 35 USC § 112

Claims 15 and 16 have been rejected as being indefinite because there is insufficient antecedent basis for certain limitations.

With the amendment to claim 16, the Applicant believes all limitations in claims 15 and 16 now have proper antecedent basis. Therefore, the Applicant respectfully requests the rejections be removed.

Claim Rejections – 35 USC § 103

Claims 11 and 15 through 17 have been rejected as being unpatentable over Rea et al. in view of EPO Patent Application 1,156,253. Essentially, the Examiner has rejected these claims on the basis that it would be obvious to a person having ordinary skill in the art to integrally mold the quick connector retainer sleeve of Rea et al. directly to a length of tubing, as taught by EPO Application '253.

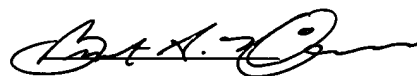
The Applicant respectfully disagrees with the Examiner that claims 11 and 15 through 17 are unpatentable on the basis that EPO Application '253 does not disclose: monolithically forming a quick connector retainer sleeve with the tubing, or a monolithic tube assembly. According to Merriam-Webster OnLine (<http://www.m-w.com>) monolithic is defined to be: “formed from a single crystal”, under 1(b)(1), “cast as a single piece”, under 2(a)-(b), and,

“formed or composed of material without joints or seams,” under 2(b). Known synonyms are uniform or homogeneous (see Thesaurus.com for these synonyms).

EPO Application ‘253 discloses a quick connector retainer sleeve integrally molded to a length of tubing (Paragraph 55) having joints and seams (Fig. 9). The fabrication process disclosed by the ‘253 Application places a previously-fabricated tube in a mold fixture and subsequently molds a connector sleeve around the tube end, with a connection between the molded sleeve and the tube arising therefrom. Still, the EPO Application does not disclose monolithically forming a connector sleeve with the tube. In other words, the tube assembly is not formed from a single operation or cast. “Integrally molding” is different than “monolithically forming.” “Integrally molding” creates a final product by joining two separate parts or materials, such as by fasteners or welding. The process disclosed in EPO Application ‘253 is no different than welding. “Monolithically forming” creates a final product from a single operation or cast, which, in the Applicant’s invention, creates a final product having the functionality of two separately joined parts while avoiding the joining issues encountered in EPO Application ‘253 (which includes the issues of: joint consistency and quality, and inefficiencies, such as time and cost, resulting from the additional fabrication step of molding and joining a molded sleeve to a previously-fabricated tube). Therefore, the “integral molding” process disclosed in EPO Application ‘253 is different than the “monolithically forming” disclosed by the Applicant in this Application.

In view of the above, it is respectfully submitted that claims 11, 15 through 17, and 25 are in condition for allowance. Reconsideration of the rejections is requested and allowance of the claims is solicited.

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